

## My God loves everyone



A couple of years ago I attended an event during Pride Week on the Sunshine Coast to show my support.

My decision to wear a t-shirt proclaiming 'My God Loves Everyone' in rainbow lettering at the event elicited mixed responses from event attendees – including derision and anger (from those possibly hurt by or suspicious of the Church) to thanks and curiosity (from those who seemed happy for the Church presence).

Some people have recently asked me about an old photo taken at the Pride Week event, so I'd like to share the story behind it. It's a great story about the opportunity to talk about Jesus with people who wouldn't normally have a conversation with a Bishop.

Amongst the many people I spoke to during the course of the day was the leader of the 'Sunshine Coast Satanists', Robin Bristow, who is pictured with me. As a fellow local, I have had a number of conversations with Robin over the years. While our conversations can be frustrating and challenging if we talk about faith and belief, I do welcome the opportunity to engage with people who have diverse, or in Robin's and my case diametrically opposed, views.



**“Some people have recently asked me about an old photo taken at the Pride Week event, so I’d like to share the story behind it. It’s a great story about the opportunity to talk about Jesus with people who wouldn’t normally have a conversation with a Bishop” (Bishop Jeremy Greaves)**

Christians are called to engage with all kinds of people. And, I would suggest that a person who calls themselves a ‘Satanist’ needs a conversation with a Christian as much as, if not more than, anyone.

However, despite the smiles in the photo, I left feeling more than a little cross and somewhat deflated. I also came away relieved that God is better at loving than I often am.

As Archbishop Desmond Tutu once wrote:

“In the end what matters is not how good we are but how good God is. Not how much we love God, but how much God loves us. And God loves us whoever we are, whatever we’ve done or failed to do, whatever we believe or can’t.”

And as we see in the life and teaching of Jesus, Tutu reminds us that, "God has a soft spot for sinners. His standards are quite low."

In fact God loves everyone (the world) so much that "he gave his only Son..." (John 3.16). That's how much, and how, God loves the world. And, as a friend reminded me recently, in Romans 5.8 we are assured that, "God proves His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

God loves everyone, sinners and saints – all of us.

My God loves everyone: tax collectors, gluttons and drunkards...and Satanists who don't think I believe in the Resurrection. God loves us all and – like a woman who turns her house upside-down searching for one lost coin, like a shepherd searching for one lost sheep, like a father rushing out to embrace the returning recalcitrant son – God will not rest until everyone knows the power of that love in their lives.

As Martyn Percy says in his new book, [\*The Humble Church: Renewing the Body of Christ\*](#):

"...it is well worth remembering that you will never, ever, in all your life, meet someone that God does not love – fully, wholly and abundantly – madly and excessively, in fact. Equally you will never meet anyone who deserves all of this love, or who merits more or less than God's own love for you. you will never meet a person that God does not long to draw into an intense relationship of truth, peace, love, joy and mutual blessing." (p.189)

As God has designed it, we are *all* called to witness and share this love with everyone we encounter. A twenty-something French Catholic nun once proclaimed, "My vocation is love!" Young people seem to get this – I think it's time we all did.

## Taking time out to say 'cello'



**(L-R) Stephen Harrison, Frances Thompson and The Rev'd Sue Grimmett enjoying their weekly cello practice session together on Thursday 29 April 2021 in the Cathedral Precinct's St Martin's House**

Around six months ago we started meeting every Thursday at lunchtime in the Cathedral Precinct's St Martin's House to practise cello together.

When the *anglican focus* Editor found out about our regular cello sessions, she naturally turned up with a camera to take pics and enquire about why we practise together, then asking us to write this joint reflection.

We find that taking this regular time out in the middle of our busy day is great for our wellbeing as it helps build community, brings joy and energises us for our respective work and ministries.

Meeting at the same place and time every week helps to give our lives rhythm, while arranging the weekly activity together as a group also helps to keep us faithful.

We also engage in a range of other hobbies, practices and sports during the week to help us to relax and recreate and find flow.

### **Being in nature, reading and finding flow – The Rev'd Sue Grimmett, Priest-in-Charge at St Andrew's, Indooroopilly**

I love to go for walks with my border collie on tracks around the Western suburbs stretch of the Brisbane River. While I don't get out every day, I do manage a few walks weekly and a longer hike on my regular day off. I like to walk on my own because as I walk, things that trouble me fall into

perspective. Being out in the natural world returns me to a sense of wonder and has a way of restoring a comforting sense of my (small) place in the world and the interconnectedness of everything.

I also love to read. The first thing I do every day before Morning Prayer is make a cup of coffee and curl up with it and a book in my favourite chair. Before the busyness of the day begins, while my mind is fresh, this time provides 30 minutes of encountering new ideas and having my own thinking stretched or challenged. I tend to leave the fiction reading for the end of the day and use the morning for non-fiction. There is not enough time for all I want to read, but habit has become my friend, and this small morning discipline of dedicated reading time leaves me with a sense of a spacious beginning to my day.

As well as these regular rituals, I find that wellbeing comes from the way I embody the time in my work – rather than how I best manage my time off. When I am doing it ‘right’, my time out feels like it is part of the flow of my role as a priest. What other job do you have the privilege of hearing people’s life stories; standing with families at the most sacred times of their lives, like around the bed with them as a beloved one is dying or in front of a couple making promises to each other; and, gathering a community of friends you love every Sunday to celebrate what is most precious?

### **Creating music, running and bush walking – Frances Thompson, St Martin’s House Receptionist**

I play violin with the Brisbane Symphony Orchestra, sing with the Cathedral Singers choir and am a member of Brisbane Handbells. By making music with others, I need to listen and focus so I have to ignore the to-do list. It is so rewarding being part of a team that creates beautiful music, which is always good for the soul.

For a number of years I have also been involved in parkrun both in Bendigo, where my husband Bishop John Roundhill was previously the Dean of the Cathedral, and in Mansfield in Brisbane. In 2019, I wrote about how [parkrun helped get me through breast cancer](#). Taking time out for parkrun when I was so unwell made me feel better and it helped distract me from the misery of chemo. John and I were regulars at Bendigo parkrun before my cancer diagnosis, and the team members were always supportive and encouraging whilst I was unwell. Whether I was walking, slowly jogging or volunteering as the tailwalker, I was always cheered to the finish line.

I also walk the family dogs Max and Arlo through the lovely bushland adjacent to Bulimba Creek, where I sometimes see koalas and wallabies and other wildlife. With so many shades of green to enjoy, being outdoors is a great opportunity for thinking, praying and reflecting.

### **Martial arts and walking the dog – Stephen Harrison, Director of Parishes and other Mission Agencies Commission**

For a long time I trained in karate three times a week with a club on the Gold Coast. Karate is a vigorous practice that requires energy and attentiveness, so I found it great for both physical fitness and mindfulness. Recently, I started Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, a grappling martial art, early in the mornings at a Brisbane club. Joining a club with set class times helps keep me motivated to attend sessions so I can stay fit and take necessary time out. I enjoy the challenge of learning a new and difficult skill.

I also enjoy walking our family’s Labrador Bella. It is a great way to get outside and take in some fresh air. I do this as often as I can. Spending time in nature and seeing things that you wouldn’t see indoors, such as newly-hatched ducklings and other wildlife, is great for my wellbeing.

Editor's note: If you would like to share with readers about your regular or ad hoc practices, sports or hobbies that help you to rest and recreate, please email Michelle via [focus@anglicanchurchsq.org.au](mailto:focus@anglicanchurchsq.org.au)

Features • Friday 30 April 2021 • By The Rev'd Canon Bruce Boase, Archbishop Phillip Aspinall

## ACSQ submission in support of a First Nations Voice



**Co-chair of the Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group, The Rev'd Canon Bruce Boase, speaking at a lunch to celebrate National Reconciliation Week in 2019, hosted by Anglicare and the Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group**

Inspired by the [Uluru Statement From the Heart](#), the Anglican Church Southern Queensland has made a submission in support of the call for a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Australian Constitution.

As Christians we are called to reconcile one with another and only then can we truly reconcile ourselves with God. It is thus important for our Diocesan community to support enshrining a long-needed First Nations Voice in the Constitution because it helps take the journey of Reconciliation from words to action. By making a submission in support of a First Nations Voice, we are taking a step forward as a movement towards Reconciliation.

As a Wakka Wakka man, a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution means the chance to be heard in a forum that is truly national. From a practical point of view, this Constitutional change will provide a lasting opportunity for First Nations peoples to be heard, especially in those conversations that most affect our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Thinking of a local woman Elder in our Diocese who often says, "We keep saying the same thing over and over, but we are not heard," making this Constitutional change will ensure that First Nations leaders are heard in spaces that most affect them, including in the critical areas of health, education, employment, justice and housing.

Our life in Christ is all about relationships. Respect for one another and supporting each other's fundamental rights are vital in moving forward. Supporting a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution is good for everyone and our Diocese's submission is an important forward step in the healing and Reconciliation journey.

Our RAP Working Group used the [From The Heart submission guidelines](#) to assist with the process of writing our submission.

Please see our Diocese's submission, signed by our Archbishop, below or [download the submission](#).

29 April 2021

Voice Secretariat  
C/- Professor Dr Marcia Langton AO and  
Professor Tom Calma AO  
Co-chairs, Senior Advisory Group  
Reply Paid 83380  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Professors

### **Re: Submission to the Indigenous Voice Co-design Process**

The Anglican Church Southern Queensland is a Diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia, stretching from Bundaberg in the north to Coolangatta in the south and west to the South Australian and Northern Territory borders. Our Diocesan community includes more than 130 parishes; 20 schools; Anglicare Southern Queensland; St Francis Theological College; and, various other ministries.

We are blessed with large numbers of culturally distinct First Nations peoples in our Diocesan community, including people from various Aboriginal Countries across the geographical regions of South East Queensland, Darling Downs South West and Wide Bay-Burnett, as well as people from other Aboriginal Countries across Australia and from the Torres Strait Islands.

Inspired by the Uluru Statement From the Heart, the Anglican Church Southern Queensland wholeheartedly supports the call for a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Australian Constitution.

The Anglican Church Southern Queensland believes in a 'fair go', which is a value shared across our nation's wider communities and is reflected in the broad support for this call. The Anglican Church Southern Queensland believes that constitutionally enshrining a First Nations Voice will be a significant step forward in enshrining long overdue fairness. It is only fair that our First Nations peoples have a genuinely independent and genuinely representative body that sits alongside Federal Parliament and Government to advise on legislation and policy that impact their communities now and into the future. Ensuring this constitutional guarantee will help provide our First Nations leaders and their communities with stability and longevity, particularly across election cycles and changes of Government.

The Anglican Church Southern Queensland seeks to uphold the value of meaningful change. In this context, we believe that a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution will support the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to make decisions at a local level and to have the autonomy to meet their social, cultural and economic needs. First Nations communities have a right

to be able to effectively and efficiently influence the laws and policies that will impact their capacity to keep community life going. Through our national Church's Synodical resolutions, we have long upheld this right, including in 2017 when General Synod resolved to "support the recommendation of the Referendum Council for a constitutionally-entrenched First Nations' Voice to the Commonwealth Parliament."

The Anglican Church Southern Queensland seeks to uphold the values of peace and reconciliation, as expressed in the fourth Anglican Communion Mark of Mission. Reconciliation is about strengthening and healing relationships with First Nations peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, for the common good of all Australians. In order for us to be sincere in our commitment to reconciliation, the Anglican Church Southern Queensland stands with our First Nations peoples to seek relationships built on mutual trust, equality, institutional integrity, unity and historical acceptance, as outlined by Reconciliation Australia. As such, we see enshrining a First Nations Voice as a significant unifying opportunity in the reconciliation journey.

The Anglican Church Southern Queensland also seeks to uphold the value of integrity and thus calls upon the Federal Government to honour its election commitment to a referendum once a model for the Voice has been agreed to. We believe that this model must reflect diverse First Nations voices, and that membership of the representative body should be open to new and previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. We also believe that legislation for the Voice must only be passed after a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament.

Yours sincerely

The Most Reverend Dr Phillip Aspinall

Archbishop of Brisbane

## Resourcing churches in advocacy and justice communications



While Cathedral Resource Church project plans were inevitably disrupted or necessarily shifted online due to COVID-19 last year, the St John's Cathedral team was working somewhat quietly behind the scenes in the resourcing space. The fruits of these efforts have started emerging.

This resourcing work includes the recently launched Adapting Ministry in Complex Times initiative, coordinated by Resource Church specialist The Rev'd Daniel Hobbs. We have also continued supporting churches with developing collaborative maturity and collaborative leadership, alongside the Justice Unit, including providing access to licensed resources created by Christian organisational psychologist Dr Neil Preston.

The Cathedral has also been working with Peter Branjerdporn from the Justice Unit and Resource Church specialist Michelle McDonald to help resource parish clergy and advocates in justice and advocacy communications. It is hoped that the key principles framework, and related resources, that we have created will help improve the effectiveness of parish clergy in their:

- small group facilitation
- Bible study preparation
- opinion piece, feature and press release writing
- community forum and workshop presenting
- media liaison
- campaigning
- political lobbying
- homily and public lecture address crafting.

For example, since August last year, Peter, Michelle and I, in consultation with other staff and clergy across our Diocese, have been developing an alternative way to engage people in climate and creation care communications. The resource we have spent over six months developing breaks new ground in the national climate and creation care space.

The alternative way, outlined in the resource, centres around:

- solutions
- shared values
- positive and constructive framing
- tangible terminology (rather than scientific or legal jargon and abstract terms)
- human agency
- greater understanding of, and sensitivity to, local contexts
- the interconnectedness of all life
- theology grounded in scripture and Christian mission and identity.

Similar principles are becoming increasingly used in advocacy communications across different sectors, as they seek to engage rather than proselytise; foster hope rather than panic; connect rather than teach dry facts; and, tailor what is shared for a local context rather than risk alienating people with messages that they may view as irrelevant.

As Christians, it is important that we are able to effectively engage other Christians, and as such, the framework we have developed emphasises our Christian identity and stewardship, particularly our belief that all of God's creation is interconnected and that there is a special position of the human being within the created order given by God for the good of all creation.

We will be running a three-hour 'Reframing climate and creation care communications for Christians' [online workshop](#) on Friday 18 June. The workshop has been designed for parish clergy and volunteers and will particularly explore the key principles resource we have developed to assist church leaders in the framing of their written and verbal communications. We recently co-hosted a similar online workshop with the National Council of Churches in Australia for clergy, advocates and communications staff across different Australian denominations, and it was well received.

Peter, Michelle and I have also been exploring how we can adapt narrative and storytelling across advocacy communications more generally – both written and verbal. We will be running a follow-up workshop for parish clergy and volunteers on the use of storytelling, including an easy-to-remember and effective four-part narrative framework that helps communicators structure their writing, conversations and presentations.

Narrative is a particularly helpful tool in advocacy communications because it helps foster meaningful engagement and open dialogue, even between people who hold opposing views. Jesus was a master storyteller and we see in the Gospels how he frequently used narrative to connect, particularly in the use of parables.

Such is the significance and effectiveness of storytelling historically across cultures, some scholars, including John Niles and Kurt Ranke, aptly suggest that we should be called 'Homo Narrans' ('story telling humans') rather than 'Homo Sapiens' ('wise humans'). I think this is probably a good idea.

The free online 'Reframing climate and creation care communications for Christians' workshop will be held on Friday 18 June between 9 am and 12 noon. [Register](#) online by 5 pm Tuesday 15 June. To find out more, please email [contact@doingjustice.org.au](mailto:contact@doingjustice.org.au).

Features • Tuesday 4 May 2021 • By The Rev'd David Baker

## Seeking shalom together



**(L-R): Bishop Ken Howell, Deputy President, Queensland Churches Together (QCT); The Rev'd David Baker, General Secretary, QCT; The Rev'd Yvonne McRostie, Presbytery Minister, The Downs, Uniting Church in Australia; Bishop Cameron Venables, Bishop for the Western Region; The Rev'd Helen Paget, President, QCT; and, Valerie Joy, QCT delegate from the Queensland Quaker community**

One of my most profound experiences of prayer was when someone just mentioned the word, 'praying'.

I was about 19 or 20, and a mate had asked me to come with him to King George Square between Ann and Adelaide Streets in Brisbane; a man was walking around the world carrying a cross, and he was going to be in the square, so we went.

While waiting for the event to begin, a couple of women near us opened conversation. One asked, "Are you guys Christians?" I replied, cheekily, pointing to my friend, "He is and I'm not!" So began a discussion with them as to why I wasn't and why I should be. I parried well, having been familiar with this approach, but was stumped at the woman's last riposte, as she looked me in the eye, "Well, David, it's been good talking with you; I want you to know something: I'll be praying for you."

I think I feigned a smile, but I know my knees wobbled! Literally! Somehow I knew in my heart that I was a goner. My rebellion was doomed!

Entering into the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, I wonder how we approach it?

The last couple of decades have been a very mixed bag for those whose hearts were inspired by the ecumenical vision that flourished in the years after the Second World War.

We have seen so many cultural and communal divides broken down; a hospitality of life and spirit between the denominations that has, overall, made us a more welcoming and appreciative people. We've grown to understand each other better, and see the value in our diverse traditions.

We've collaborated together on many issues, spoken with – nearly – one voice on issues of human dignity and the stewardship of creation.

Yet there is still a long way to go. A deeper journey into unity beckons us. It is a journey in the way of the cross – a journey of dying and rising.

We seem to have reached, in institutional terms, a fairly comfortable and benign accommodation.

Sometimes the vision of unity around the table of our Lord is an upland that seems too hard to face, let alone begin to climb.

Yet surely, it is our calling, a definitive sign of our unity in Christ.

So the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity comes around again in our yearly cycle. The theme for this year is "Abide in my love, and you shall bear much fruit", from John 15, Jesus' parting words with his disciples before Good Friday.

Love's founding work is to seek truth and communion, justice and reconciliation; to seek shalom. It's a journey into vulnerability that demands a confidence that the journey is worth it, the cost of failure too great; the value of success, compelling.

As we enter into this week of prayer, contemplating the command, the love, and the hope of Jesus for us, his disciples, will our knees wobble and our hearts be moved at the great call upon us, his people, his body?

## Navigating complexity together



**Experienced complexity facilitators Vivienne Read and Julie Cunningham from Complexability**

Our Diocesan community recently held the first Adapting Ministry in Complex Times workshop, as part of the exciting Resource Churches project initiative, which also involves The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt working alongside Communications and Community Engagement specialist Michelle McDonald in the [advocacy messaging](#) space.

I am coordinating a co-learning community as a Resource Church specialist alongside Resource Church leader The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt who has extensive experience in, and knowledge of, the complexity space.

Eleven diverse parishes from different locations and traditions have been invited to participate in this pilot group, with several individuals from each parish taking part, including the parish priest and two to four lay leaders.

Six workshops will be held over a period of eight months on different participating parish grounds, with an online community of practice currently developing via a built-for-purpose online platform, which also makes resources available.

It was great to see the response of participants when they discovered on the day that the workshop series was launched that this is not a traditional consultancy experience, but rather a community of practice that will benefit from the insights of [Complexability](#) facilitators Vivienne Read and Julie Cunningham and the wisdom and experience of their Anglican community leader peers.

The co-learning community seeks to form leaders so they are better equipped to discern and engage with what is emerging in their communities, with a focus on:

- Building shared capabilities between clergy and laity for working in complexity.
- Addressing current issues of concern in the life of faith communities.
- Practical application through implementing and monitoring innovative initiatives.

In the forthcoming workshops we will explore what complexity is and about complexity theory, complexity methods and principles, systems thinking and the [Cynefin Framework](#).

Participating parish communities will engage with learning modules in complexity principles and methods integrated with theological reflection and formation. In addition, there will be ongoing mentoring and coaching.

Experiences and insights throughout the pilot program will be captured via special online software called SenseMaker®, which includes a cohort learning and reflection journal that turns stories into data.

What I found most interesting about the recent Saturday launching workshop was discovering that such a diverse group of parishes from across our Diocese are experiencing many of the same challenges, including resourcing; fundraising; ageing congregations; ageing assets; depleted funds; and, the shift towards hybrid in-person/online service and ministry delivery.

Another shared key challenge that emerged in Saturday's dialogue is balancing compliance and administrative requirements with mission and ministry, especially in environments where the Church may be seen as irrelevant or with suspicion.

A key highlight of the first workshop was hearing a lay parish leader comment at the end of the day that she now knows that she is not alone in the challenges she faces, and that a complexity approach will help give her the language and a framework tool to help navigate her way through these challenges.

I look forward to exploring the facets of complexity further in my new role as a Resource Church specialist, alongside experienced practitioners like Peter Catt , and seeing how parishioners and fellow priests adapt the principles and tools learnt during the workshops in their own faith communities.

Stay tuned for Cathedral parishioner Angie Mooney's and The Rev'd Sue Grimmiett's insights on what they have learned through their workshop and community of practice participation and how they have adapted these learnings to their diverse ministries.

## The Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ



A stained-glass window featuring the Ascension of Jesus and Pentecost

I always feel a bit uncomfortable with celebrating the Ascension of Our Lord, and I struggle to describe the event and understand its theological significance. The Feast Day is overshadowed by Easter, which is celebrated 40 days before the Ascension with Pentecost celebrated 10 days after the Ascension. In recent years, some Churches have observed the Feast on the Seventh Sunday of Easter, and this only seems to make it harder to recognise the significance of the Feast. We can end up thinking that “We observe the day because it is in the Prayer Book”, and for no other reason.

The Feast refers to events described at the end of the Gospel according to Luke ([24.50-53](#)), at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles ([1.9](#)) and the ‘long ending’ of the Gospel according to Mark ([16.19](#)). the Gospel according to John the risen Christ assures Mary Magdalene that “he is ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” ([John 20.17](#)). There is no description of the actual event. Although there is little direct reference to Jesus’ resurrection in the Letter to the Hebrews, the principal theme of the book is the exaltation of the risen Lord. The Ascension affirms that, as Jesus has ascended “into the heavens so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell” (The Collect for The Ascension Day, The Book of Common Prayer).

The Ascension points both to an event in history, the last resurrection appearance of Jesus to his disciples, and to the purpose of Jesus’ victory on the cross, the taking of our humanity to God. However, I think that we need to face up to some problems.

First, to some the Ascension may suggest that Heaven is located ‘above’ the earth. Seventeenth century ‘Muggletonians’ believed that Heaven was six miles above the surface of the earth and that, on a clear day and with good eyesight, it could be glimpsed. Christian iconography is not always helpful, and immediately above the altar in the Ascension Chapel of the Anglican Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham the feet of the ascending Jesus protrude through a polystyrene cloud!

Secondly, we desire to celebrate Jesus' presence, and not lament his absence. The Gospel according to Matthew has 'book ends'. At the beginning of Matthew's account there is a story of God revealing to Joseph in a dream that the unborn child of Mary will be 'Emmanuel', "God is with us" ([Matthew 1.23](#)). At the end of the Gospel, Jesus reassured the disciples with the declaration, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" ([Matthew 28.20](#)). This presence is the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel according to John, the Spirit is poured out by the Father on the day of resurrection and it is in response to Jesus' promise "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever" ([John 14.16](#)). But in the Gospel according to Luke, the Ascension is a prelude to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost "like the rush of a violent wind" ([Acts 2.2](#)).

The apostle Paul developed a theology of the Holy Spirit. Writing to the Romans he referred to the 'Spirit of God' as the 'Spirit of Christ' ([8.9](#)). The Holy Spirit does not replace the risen Lord for he is one with the risen Lord and the Father in the life of the Holy Trinity. The Ascension is located as an event in history, but it points to the central event of the Christian scriptures, the resurrection of Jesus, to the reality of his presence with those who are united to him in baptism and faith, and to the future hope of our transformation into his likeness.

Thirdly, the theological significance of his 'going away'. Traditionally, we celebrate the Feast of the Ascension as a celebration of God taking our humanity to himself. God's creation of our humanity is dynamic and not static, and we recognise that we are born human so that we may 'become human'. Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Mary, is fully God and fully human. This means that he not only reveals God but that he reveals what it means to be a man or a woman. His humanity is much more than a description of his physiology. He is the complete human being.

God has invested us with desire. The psalmist wrote "As a deer longs for the running brooks so longs my soul for you, O God" ([Psalm 42.1](#)), and St Augustine of Hippo commented "You have made us for Yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in You" (*Augustine Confessions* 1). We desire to be with God and we desire to be alive to our humanity. To be human, we are challenged to die to selfishness and live with compassion and forgiveness for friends and neighbours. This is only partially achieved in this world and the aim of our lives is to become the person God has created us to be. In ascending into heaven, Jesus has gone before us so that, by the grace of his Holy Spirit, this process of 'humanisation' can be achieved.

**News • Wednesday 5 May 2021 • By Michael Franks**

## **Budget must tackle housing affordability**

Anglicare Southern Queensland's annual Rental Affordability Snapshot has again illuminated the dire situation facing people on low incomes in Greater Brisbane

Anglicare Southern Queensland's annual Rental Affordability Snapshot has again illuminated the dire situation facing people on low incomes in Greater Brisbane.

The not-for-profit community services organisation is now calling on the Federal Government to take immediate action in this month's Budget to tackle housing affordability.

Anglicare SQ Executive Director Karen Crouch said South East Queensland's tight rental market, combined with COVID-19-related job losses and the recent reduction of government support for job seekers, was sending more people spiralling into poverty and towards homelessness.

"We are seeing a huge increase in the number of people who are doing it really tough, who are on the verge of homelessness and who are having to choose between paying their rent or buying medicine and food," Ms Crouch said.

"People are resorting to living in tents in the backyards of their family and friends.

"It's honestly just astounding that in a country as wealthy and fortunate as Australia, we have come to this. It just breaks your heart."

This year's Greater Brisbane Snapshot found:

⇒ A single person earning minimum wage would spend 48% of their income on rent

⇒ 0% of rentals are affordable and appropriate for a single parent earning minimum wage or receiving the JobSeeker or Parenting payments

⇒ 1% of rentals are affordable and appropriate for a couple with children earning minimum wage

⇒ 1% of rentals are affordable and appropriate for a single person on the Disability Support Pension

⇒ 3% of rentals are affordable and appropriate for a couple on the Aged Pension

⇒ A young person on Youth Allowance would spend 97% of their income on rent, or 65% for a room in a share house.

"We are now hearing stories of people who earn good incomes with strong rental histories struggling to find accommodation due to the fierce competition for rentals," Ms Crouch said.

"Our homelessness services are receiving calls from people who have unsuccessfully applied for more than 100 rentals, even though they can afford to rent.

"So people on lower wages and income support don't stand a chance.

"Some charities are even telling people to consider leaving areas they've lived in for many years if they don't want to end up living on the street.

"Now is the time for our government to take action on two key priorities.

"As a nation, we must make sure every Australian has enough money to pay the rent.

"And we must provide enough affordable rentals for the people who need them.

"We keep hearing that the economy is bouncing back. But the recovery is leaving too many people behind.

"There aren't enough affordable homes in any region. And the new 'increased' rate of JobSeeker is so low that it hasn't made a dent in affordability.

"We need to invest in affordable housing. Our shortfall is massive. We need 500,000 new social and affordable rentals across Australia.

“Ensuring people have an adequate income and investing in housing would be the most powerful ways to tackle the rental crisis.”

[The 2021 Snapshot is available for download here.](#)

**Reflections • Thursday 6 May 2021 • By Rhys, Josh, Zachary, Tom, Archie, Takamasa, Ashley**

## What 'Nurturing Relationships' means to me



**Churchie students Rhys and Takamasa with their Religious Education 'Nurturing Relationships' unit title pages in February 2021**

In this special joint reflection, seven young Churchie students share about what the 2021 Diocesan theme 'Nurturing Relationships' means to them.

### **Rhys – Year 6 student, Churchie**

'Nurturing relationships' is about trying to make a new relationship or trying to keep them. It means the relationship is important to you.

I did this drawing about the things that are important to me. I love playing soccer, my home and our car. The love heart is for relationships within my family. The flowerpot is because my parents like flowers.

### **Josh – Year 5 student, Churchie**

'Nurturing relationships' means spending time together and learning each other's personalities. It also means telling each other our needs and wants and how we can do better to change each other's lives.

I believe nurturing relationships is telling your friends or family what you are struggling with and asking for help. For example, if I was saying I am struggling making money, I could tell my family and friends and they might help me.

I think nurturing relationships is helping one another and trusting each other. However, if you lie to your friends, you are not nurturing relationships and you will break relationships. For example, if I say to God, "I love God and God is the best" and then I worship another idol, that would be losing God's trust.

I think young people need to nurture relationships because they need to learn two times more than older people so they can grow up. The benefits are they would make lots of friends this way and never get bored. A child needs to learn about nurturing relationships because it makes them more trustworthy.

Every night our family nurtures relationships by telling each other if we had a good or bad day. We nurture relationships with God, too.

My mum tells me that everybody has the right to feel hurt and you cannot demand that they don't feel hurt by your actions. If you never feel emotions, you are basically a robot.

By nurturing relationships, I got more and more friends and I am happy, and my life is getting better. I have more confidence to tell the truth and do the right thing.

### **Zachary – Year 6 student, Churchie**

'Nurturing relationships' involves caring for and protecting someone or something. It is a very important aspect of our lives.

It is vitally important for all people to nurture relationships, particularly young people. We learn from our environment and this includes our friends and family. Fostering good relationships is an important element of growth.

My grandmother, whom I affectionately call 'Ba' (Vietnamese for 'grandmother') is a pure example of the importance of nurturing relationships. She was only 29 years old when she left war-ravaged Vietnam with her three young children, the youngest of who is my mum. She was only six months of age at the time. They were part of the Vietnamese 'boat people' – refugees whom Australia was kind enough to welcome. Due to this generosity, she was able to bring up her three children in Australia with all the freedoms which were lost to her in Vietnam. It was her love, determination and sheer hard work that all her children went on to be successful. I am very proud that she is my grandmother and think she is truly brave to embark on such a journey all those many years ago.

I think this has impacted me immensely as it has given me a greater appreciation of what family means. My grandmother's journey demonstrates the sacrifices she made to give her children a better future. There are many lessons I can learn from this – determination, resilience and hard work. After all, there is much to be grateful for.

Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts.

### **Tom – Year 6 student, Churchie**

To me 'nurturing relationships' means to value a relationship and value the other person. It also means investing time into cultivating a respectful and healthy connection.

It is important for young people to nurture relationships because these relationships could turn into close friends who are helpful in life. This is especially important to start at an early age, as it is much easier to make lifelong friends.

Over the years, my younger brother Will, and I have developed a strong relationship. Sometimes we don't get along, but because we have developed that strong bond, it is quite simple to resolve arguments.

This impacts me by being able to have a better relationship with my brother. This has many benefits such as being able to assist and support one another during life's ups and downs.

### **Archie – Year 5 student, Churchie**

'Nurturing relationships' means to me not hurting others' feelings or breaking their trust because they may not forget, and they will find it hard to "open their gates back up to you." This is inspired by Proverbs 18.19, which we discussed in the Religious Education lesson, 'The Power of Words'.

If young people don't nurture relationships they'll have no friends to play with and will be lonely in the long term.

I taught my sister Lulu to bowl and bat in cricket in the backyard at home. We ended up having a great time together and now she can bowl me out!

This helped both of us because she learnt how to bowl (and she got better) and that helps Lulu, and I got to practise more because I have someone to bowl to me.

When I nurture a relationship, two people are happy. The friend because I'm being kind and me because my friend is kind back. It also feels good to be kind to one another.

### **Takamasa – Year 4 student, Churchie**

To me 'nurturing relationships' means being kind and being a good friend.

It is important for young people to nurture relationships because then little people grow into good people. Small people copy the older people and then do better.

One day someone tripped over and everyone at Churchie stopped to say, "Are you ok?" This made me feel so good and nice because they are good and nice.

### **Ashley – Year 5 student, Churchie**

To me, 'nurturing relationships' means seeking to make new friends and care for them.

It is important to nurture relationships so when young people grow up they have many friends.

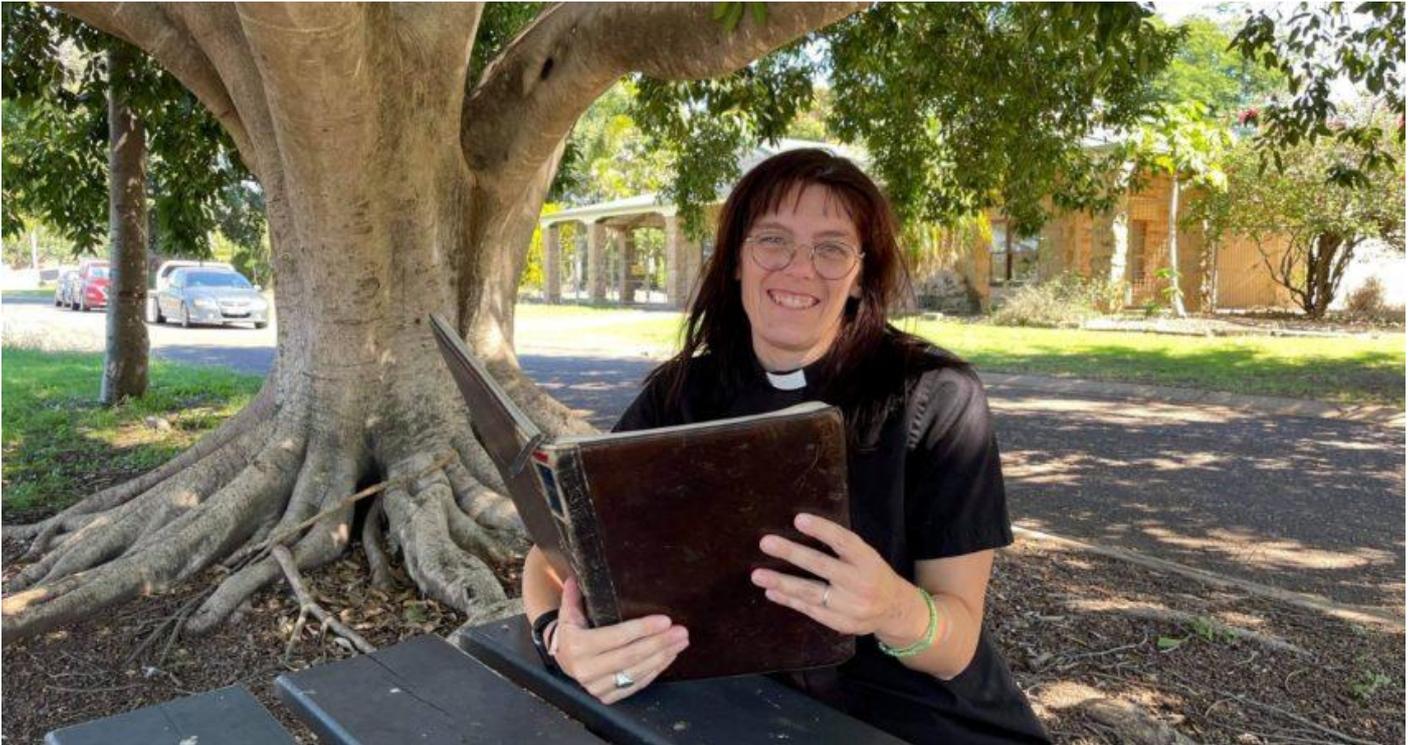
Someone new to Churchie came and sat with me and the people I was sitting with. He didn't know many people there, but he still did it. He is now friends with the people he sat with.

That action impacted me because it showed me how to make friends and sit with people, even if you don't know them.

We should always nurture relationships and make new friends.

**Reflections • Thursday 22 April 2021 • By The Rev'd Dr Gemma Dashwood OAM**

## Why I studied theology



**"The St Francis College lecturers come from a wide range of backgrounds, which allows for rich and deep conversation on many topics. It is a safe space in which to learn where everyone's opinions and values are respected. Face-to-face lectures are second to none, although online attendance is also possible for those who can't attend in person" (The Rev'd Dr Gemma Dashwood)**

Being born and bred Anglican, I initially started studying theology so that I could be more engaged with liturgy and increase my knowledge of the Bible. I began by just doing one subject at a time; however, within a couple of years I was hooked. I then started to realise that my interest ran somewhat deeper than what I had initially thought, and so I started picking up more subjects.

I was active as a Liturgical Assistant in my local parish, and I eventually realised that I was being called to take up more of a leadership role within the Church, specifically as a non-stipendiary priest in areas of need. So, in 2017, I made enquiries into the Formation Programme and, after a lengthy period of discernment, was ordained a Deacon in December 2020.

I studied at our Diocesan community's theological college, St Francis College which is located in one of the most precious spaces in Brisbane. The location is often accurately described as a 'sanctuary' or 'oasis' just outside of the city. The surroundings are beautiful and the chapel is intimate and peaceful

(my grandfather also loved it when he used to visit many years ago). The regular opportunities to worship within the St Francis community provide a spiritually and liturgically rewarding experience.

The Roscoe Library is a book lover's and researcher's goldmine. The library staff are wonderful – nothing is too much trouble for them. The range of resources is amazing. But, a heads up – you can spend hours of your day in there once you start exploring.

The St Francis College lecturers come from a wide range of backgrounds, which allows for rich and deep conversation on many topics. It is a safe space in which to learn where everyone's opinions and values are respected. Face-to-face lectures are second to none, although online attendance is also possible for those who can't attend in person.

Academically, learning Hebrew and Greek at St Francis College has given me a greater appreciation of Biblical interpretation, and the various Biblical subjects have definitely assisted me in sermon writing and presenting. On the other hand, the humanities-based subjects have helped me to extend theology into the real world, which is invaluable when taking part in pastoral care and interacting with parishioners and members of the wider community.

One of the most significant activities I was involved in as a student of St Francis College was the Morning and Evening Prayer broadcasting that started during the first COVID-19 lockdown. We each took turns at leading the liturgy from wherever we were – and for me that was often at the hospital where I work as a doctor. Not only did I end up broadcasting to my fellow students, but I also livestreamed to the hospital television network. The number of people (staff and patients) who said they benefited was enormous. It was a great privilege to be a part of that.

Another highlight of attending St Francis College is meeting many special friends and colleagues during, with whom I have formed lifelong connections.

If you are thinking that studying theology might be for you, I firstly encourage you to explore further. Looking back, I wish I had started my theological study earlier.

Secondly, keep an open mind to where it might lead you. Each one of us has a role to play in carrying out the will of God and the St Francis College team is experienced in helping people discern where their calling might be.

Most importantly, remember that everything you have to offer is important and valuable. No matter what your background is, St Francis College has a pathway for you to explore Anglicanism and the scriptures.

Oh, and finally, remember that we are all lifelong learners. All of us.

**Take part in St Francis College's virtual and in-person [Open Days in May](#) to find out about the wide range of study options for exploring the Christian faith, ask questions about courses, talk to staff and learn about what St Francis College has to offer.**

## Award-winning author and journalist visits Glennie



(L-R) Mrs Katrina Wood (Glennie parent and team member), Mrs Abby Varley (Acting Head of Department – Health and Physical Education P-12 and Junior School Sports Coordinator), Mrs Jane Roper (Deputy Head of Junior Years – Teaching and Learning), Mrs Kate Harris (Head of Junior Years), Madonna King, Mrs Wendy Henley (Junior Years Teacher) and Mrs Marie Miegel (Junior Years Teacher Librarian)

The Glennie School welcomed one of Australia’s most accomplished parenting authors, award-winning journalist Madonna King, to campus recently.

The bestselling author of *Being 14* and *Fathers and Daughters* shared what parents need to know about their daughter’s shift from child to teenager – how she feels, what she thinks, what worries her and ‘what you can do to help’ tips.

Award-winning journalist, commentator and author Madonna King sought the counsel of 500 10-year-old girls, 1600 mothers, and 100 Year 5 school teachers for her new book, *TEN-AGER*.

Dozens of school principals, teen psychologists, doctors, researchers and female role models were also interviewed to provide a guide for parents caring for tween daughters ahead of adolescence.

Glennie parent Katrina Wood said that Madonna’s insights were both informative and encouraging.

“As a parent of an 8-year-old and a 12-year old, Madonna described the last two years with my now 12-year-old daughter – her likes, and dislikes, moods, friendship struggles and feelings are all real and felt by so many other girls her age.

“Madonna set my mind at ease – that we should not feel guilty about some of the decisions we make as parents.

"We are caring for and protecting our girls as best we can. I can't wait to finish reading *TEN-AGER!*" Mrs Wood said.

The event was a huge success with over 150 parents attending to listen to Madonna's advice.

**News • Thursday 22 April 2021**

## **New JobSeeker rate is plunging people into poverty**

Anglicare Australia has renewed its call to raise the rate of JobSeeker and related payments for good. The call follows the release of a new report on financial stress commissioned by the Brotherhood of St Laurence

Anglicare Australia has renewed its call to raise the rate of JobSeeker and related payments for good. The call follows the release of [a new report on financial stress](#) commissioned by the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

"Countless reports have shown the need to raise the rate of these payments for good. This one is just the latest," Anglicare Australia's Executive Director Kasy Chambers said.

"This report adds to years of research on government payments. It has again found that people surviving on JobSeeker and other payments are the most likely to live in poverty.

"With 1.6 million people now relying on JobSeeker or Youth Allowance, it shows that the latest round of cuts is pushing record numbers of people into hardship.

"The research also shows the devastating impact the rate is having on children. The new rate of JobSeeker will leave one in six children in poverty across Australia.

"That is a modern high – and one we should be ashamed of."

Ms Chambers said that raising the rate of payments is the best way to lift children and families out of poverty.

"This report shows us that poverty, especially child poverty, has become a national crisis.

"It also shows that raising the rate of income payments is the best way to tackle that crisis.

"It's time for the Government to raise the rate for good and end the poverty trap, instead of leaving people behind."

## Q&A with the Principal of St Francis College and second-generation Bishop, The Right Rev'd Dr Jonathan Holland



**Bishop Jonathan Holland and Kerry's wedding day on 30 August 1980 in Perth**

Bishop Jonathan Holland is the Principal of St Francis College and the Executive Director of the Ministry Education Commission. He is a husband and father and the son of a Bishop.

### **Where do you currently live and where do you worship?**

I live at Wavell Heights and I worship at St Francis College's Chapel of The Holy Spirit in the Parish of Milton.

### **How long have you been involved in the Anglican Church and in what roles?**

I've been involved with the Anglican Church all my life. My father was an Anglican priest and Bishop. I grew up in Perth, was ordained in the Diocese of Perth and also served in the Diocese of Sydney before moving to Brisbane in 1993.

### **What is your current ACSQ role and how does this role contribute to the Church's mission?**

As Principal of St Francis College, I'm involved in the training and formation of our future clergy. I'm also Executive Director of the Ministry Education Commission, overseeing a suite of ministries and services including [Anglican Youth, Children and Families ministry \(AYCF\)](#); [the Community of the Way](#), an intentional community of young people; a lay education program ministry, called [FormedFaith](#); the [Spiritual Directors Formation program](#); and, the Roscoe Library.

## **What projects and activities are you currently working on?**

We're planning for our upcoming Open Day on 18 May and 20 May and I invite readers to come along and find out what we have to offer. I'm also delivering a series of lectures this semester on the Early Church and Christian Worship.

## **How and when did you feel called to the priesthood?**

In my childhood, the Anglican Church felt like a second home. When I was 22 years of age, my younger brother died tragically and unexpectedly and I felt then, more keenly, questions of meaning and purpose. After that I gravitated towards ordination.

## **Why did you decide to become a priest?**

I had a growing conviction that it's a good way to spend a life and as I explored it further it seemed like a natural fit for me. Looking back, it's been a good and right decision.

## **What advice do you have for those considering entering the priesthood in our Diocese?**

You are giving your life to a very good cause: dealing with ultimate realities, with God and Christ. You meet a tremendous number of people from all walks of life and it is an incredible privilege to engage with others – sometimes at the most significant moments of their lives, happy and sad, as Christ's ambassador, as it were.

## **How do theological studies help to form and encourage people in their faith?**

Theological studies ground faith in a deeper and richer understanding of God; they help to bring faith more alive. They deepen the union with Christ – or at least that is my experience.

## **What has been one of the highlights of your time as Executive Director of St Francis College so far?**

Seeing those we have trained at St Francis College be ordained. It provides a real sense of pride.

## **What have been the key challenges of your role so far and how have you worked through these?**

Growing enrolments is a key challenge in my role as Principal of St Francis College and getting word out about the available resources and courses so people can grow more in their faith.



**“Theological studies ground faith in a deeper and richer understanding of God; they help to bring faith more alive. They deepen the union with Christ” (Bishop Jonathan Holland pictured with Formation Student Mamuor Kumpeter at St Francis College in 2021)**

### **Can you tell us a little about your personal faith journey?**

My faith journey has been a very rewarding and enriching experience, made more so because I have journeyed with Kerry, my wife, in many ways. We have grown in Christ together.

### **What is your favourite scripture and why?**

It's the image of the father throwing his arms around his lost son and kissing him tenderly. It's the highlight of the New Testament. It represents God's attitude to each one of us.

### **What person of faith inspires you the most and why?**

My parents – I saw the faith live in them.



**A young Bishop Jonathan Holland (standing, far left) with his family in Perth in 1961**

**What are the primary strengths of the Church and what is the best way to make the most of these for the benefit of our communities?**

The Church's primary strength is the faith that lives in its people. There is a great and understated kindness in Anglicans, one fruit of the Spirit. You find people of faith and kindness in every Anglican Church Southern Queensland parish.

**What do you do in your free time to recharge and relax?**

I enjoy gardening and exercise (which is mainly walking in my local park) and reading novels, biographies and a variety of non-fiction.

**What's your best childhood memory?**

Playing football or cricket on the back lawn with my dad and two brothers.

**What book have you given away most as a gift and why?**

I am very possessive of my books. I don't give them away too readily!

## What makes you nostalgic and why?

I'm not given to nostalgia. I love history and the past, but I recognise that to learn from the past is life and to live in it is death.

## If you are having a bad day, what do you do to cheer yourself up?

I usually talk to Kerry and have a glass of wine.

## When do you do your best thinking?

In the mornings, in the first hour or two before 8.30 am.

You are invited to St Francis College's Open Day to find out about the College's wide range of study options for exploring the Christian faith:

[Virtual Open Day](#) – Tuesday 18 May 2021: 7-8.30pm

[On Campus Open Day](#) – Thursday 20 May 2021: 12.30-2pm or 5.30-7pm

News • Wednesday 5 May 2021 • By Anglican Communion News Service

## How are Anglicans around the world fighting racism inside and outside Church structures?



The Church of England's Anti-Racism Taskforce carrying out preparatory work ahead of this year's launch of the Archbishops' Commission to address racism

Churches around the Anglican Communion are deeply involved in the fight against racism, both within the structures of the Church itself, and in wider society. The year 2020 was marked by an increase in support for the Black Lives Matter movement, following the death of George Floyd, an African American, at the hands of police officers in the US. Many Churches released statements in response to the tragedy, affirming a commitment to racial reconciliation. COVID-19 has also disproportionately impacted minority groups. Churches around the world have been doing what they can in the fight against racism.

When talking about racism, many Churches have seen the need to examine their own internal structures. **The US-based Episcopal Church (TEC)** has a ministry titled 'Becoming Beloved Community', a long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation, and justice in personal lives, ministries, and society. As part of the resources available within that ministry, there is a 10-part film and reading series called *Sacred Ground*. Small groups are invited to walk through chapters of America's history of race and racism, while weaving in threads of family story, economic class, and political and regional identity. It is built around a curriculum focused on Indigenous, Black, Latino, and Asian/Pacific American histories as they intersect with European American histories.

**The Church of England (C of E)** has similarly been examining their own structures. An Anti-Racism Taskforce was set up in 2020 by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. It was challenged to develop bold changes to ensure greater racial justice and equality in the C of E. It came after the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby told the General Synod there was "no doubt" that the Church of England was still "deeply institutionally racist".

As part of its work, the taskforce is examining more than 160 formal recommendations made since 1985 on racial justice in the C of E. They will publish a final report on Thursday (22 April). In an update, the taskforce said: "where racism is found, it must be challenged. Whether masked in our behaviours, whispered in our pews, institutionalised in our systems or paraded on our streets, the Church as the body of Christ is called to oppose those actions which cause others to be treated as less than fully human and to dismantle those practices which prevent the full flourishing of God's people."

The taskforce identified five key areas in the life of the Church where urgent action is needed. These are participation – including appointments, education, training and mentoring, young people, and governance and structures. Members of the taskforce have been working together in sub-groups on the priority areas and will publish an action implementation timetable in the final report. They have said that "the time for talking and lament has now given way for a time of action."

**The Anglican Church of Canada** was one of the provinces to release a statement after the death of George Floyd. In it, they described being "horrified by the public murder of George Floyd" and offered their "prayerful support and solidarity with our sister church [TEC] as it prays and guides its people."

They said that their commitment to confronting racism in the life of the Church and the place of racism in their own nation was a commitment that needed to be "renewed daily", adding that: "our own house is not in order. Systematic racism exists in every part of Canada."

They repented of their complicity in the continuing structures of racism and oppression in the Church and society. The statement drew on the fourth of the Anglican Communion's Marks of Mission: "to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation" and said: "the Anglican Church of Canada has been wrestling with racism and our complicity in systems of injustice for decades. It is a matter of public record that the

Anglican Church of Canada has been committed to and learning about a new path to reconciliation with Indigenous Anglicans. We recommit ourselves today to that path. The legacy of racism, colonialism, and the residential schools they spawned, as well as the open wound of the plight of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls continues to call out for healing.”

In June 2020, 12 Archbishops and more than 60 Bishops signed the [Statement on Environmental Racism](#) issued by the **Anglican Communion Environmental Network**. This statement was also released in response to the death of George Floyd. It said that, “in order to fight environmental injustice, we must also fight racial injustice.”

The statement is a call to concrete action with signatories committing to a number of action points, including but not limited to: listening to the voices of Indigenous peoples; recognising and challenging white privilege in society and the Church; recognising the colonial past of the Anglican Communion; identifying the need for further study and active listening around issues of racism; and, recognising and challenging theological ideologies and social norms that perpetuate racism.

As well as confronting racism within their own institutions, Churches have been supporting members of society who are most impacted by racism. For example, in 2019, the **Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa (CAPA)** convened a regional workshop to define and design a coordinated response to migration and trafficking. Migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons are often the victims of racism and xenophobia in society. CAPA are working with Churches Witnessing with Migrants-Africa to realise a vision where “all migrants feel safe, are treated with dignity and are empowered to realise their full God-given potential.”

They do so through a network of grassroots migrants, migrant-serving institutions and faith communities and individuals and partners working for the dignity, hospitality and companionships of all migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons.

In Brazil, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit Indigenous communities the hardest. Many of them have minimal healthcare, no access to masks or protection supplies, and are not being given proper guidance on how to keep themselves safe. The **Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil (Anglican Church of Brazil)** has been sharing resources and has manufactured hundreds of masks for those most at risk of coronavirus. They have joined forces with the Association of Indigenous Women Artisans of the Upper Rio Negro to help families who depend on the income of Indigenous women who have not been able to work during the pandemic.

In Cyprus, COVID-19 has also had an impact on vulnerable minorities. Refugees and people seeking asylum, who often suffer from racism and exploitation, have struggled to gain access to food during the pandemic. They are often reliant on food vouchers, which can only be used in certain shops, where goods cost more than those bought with cash. The Cypriot government is moving people seeking asylum out of the hostels where they have been living, and into the *Kokkinotrimithia* reception centre. The Refugee Council has described the centre as: “a detention centre made up of tents where people are living in appalling conditions.”

**Saint Paul’s Anglican Cathedral in Nicosia** has long been providing monthly meals for refugees and people seeking asylum; however, since the pandemic, they have partnered with Refugee Support Europe and other individuals, and have delivered hundreds of meals to those in need.

Churches are also involved in impacting the global conversations around racism. **The Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations'** delegation to the United Nations Environment Assembly successfully influenced the outcome of a joint statement by proposing the specific inclusion of 'environmental racism' as an issue that the Assembly must address.

First published on the [Anglican Communion News Service website](#) on 19 April 2021.

News • Thursday 6 May 2021 • By World Council of Churches

## WCC, Christian Conference of Asia grieve and pray with churches in India as COVID-19 surges

In a pastoral letter, the World Council of Churches and Christian Conference of Asia expressed their concern, grief and prayerful solidarity with the churches in India as COVID-19 surges in South Asian countries, with 7 May to be observed as a day of praying and fasting

In a pastoral letter, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Christian Conference of Asia expressed their concern, grief and prayerful solidarity with the churches in India as COVID-19 surges in South Asian countries.

"We stand with you in solidarity and prayer in the midst of the suffering and loss of thousands of lives in India," reads the letter.

"We grieve with you before God, for the loss of so many family members, friends, pastors, teachers and healthcare workers who have been taken by this pandemic."

The letter also expresses grief for the pain of those who are sick and suffering.

"It is our hope and prayer that during this period of crisis, God Almighty will continue to accompany you, as you uphold each other in the struggle for healing and recovery," reads the letter.

"We particularly lift up and pray for the healthcare personnel, hospitals, clinics and community health initiatives of the churches which are being overwhelmed and stretched to their limits, serving and caring for the flood of sick and suffering people."

The WCC and the Christian Conference of Asia will join churches in India in observing 7 May as a Day of Praying and Fasting for the healing of India, called for by three Church bodies in India: the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, National Council of Churches in India, and Evangelical Fellowship of India.

"We are also encouraging the members of the global ecumenical fellowship—individuals, communities and institutions—to mobilise resources and to extend support for the work of the Churches in India in accompanying and healing the coronavirus-affected people and communities," reads the letter.

"In a situation like this, where we all live amidst fear, anxiety, and uncertainty, may our faith and spiritual values sustain us to live with hope in God's abundant mercies, love, care and protection."

[Read the full text of the joint pastoral letter of the WCC and CCA](#)

First Published on the [World Council of Churches website](#) on 5 May 2021.

News • Wednesday 5 May 2021 • By World Council of Churches

## Simple vaccination message: "Do to others, what you want them to do to you"



The World Council of Churches (WCC) convened a press briefing from its headquarters on 28 April. Prof. Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri, WCC deputy general secretary; Archbishop emeritus Dr Anders Wejryd, WCC president for Europe; and Dr Mwai Makoka, WCC programme executive for Health and Healing, informed journalists of the WCC's campaign for World Immunization Week.

"It is a good thing for the WCC to engage and for Churches to commit themselves to this," said Wejryd, who was introduced as a "WCC Vaccine Champion".

"It's a good thing to start in a very basic ethical sentence – "do to others, what you want them to do to you; and don't do to others, what you don't want them to do to you," the WCC Europe president said.

### 'I don't want to be infected'

"I don't want to be infected by COVID-19. And I absolutely don't want to be the one that brings it on to someone else. I think that is the very basic thing. It is all about solidarity."

He said that naturally, there are risks with vaccinations.

“But those risks are minimal, compared to the risks that follow from the infection from the actual disease, which obviously, is such a strange and difficult one.”

Phiri spoke of the WCC in the arena of health. “Part of our mission is to promote healing. Health and healing have always been important in the work of the World Council of Churches, from its inception.

“And this is because of the mission of Jesus Christ that included healing,” she said.

“So part of our mission is to promote healing.”

She added: “WCC facilitated the establishment of national-level Christian health associations in several countries, especially in Africa, to promote ecumenical cooperation in health service delivery among different Churches.”

## **Church healing ministry**

Makoka said that, in a 1964 WCC consultation, a key issue that came out was that “the healing ministry belongs to the whole Church, and that specialized programmes, like church hospitals and clinics, must reasonably be integrated into the life and witness of the Church.”

He outlined four interventions.

“The first one is health education, that churches, local church congregations, can be places of health education. The other one is practical actions. The third one is advocacy for care for creation. And the other area is public witness, taking a public stand on key issues, each one in their area of influence.”

He said there is now a handbook the WCC has produced to accompany churches in establishing and running sustainable health promotion ministries. There is also material for churches to deal with “bottlenecks” in dealing with COVID-19 issues.

Some of the journalists’ questions related to how the WCC supports the global campaign for vaccine equity include easing intellectual property rules around patents to enable the quicker and more equitable manufacture of vaccines.

During the annual World Immunization Week, an initiative by UNICEF taking place 24-30 April, the WCC has intensified its support. It has done this by appointing influential members from the fellowship to join the 300 Vaccination Champions, which its long-time child-rights partner UNICEF is mobilizing for world immunization.

The objective is to exercise influence through social media blogs and other channels to raise awareness about the critical role of immunisation through vaccination in saving lives.

WCC acting general secretary The Rev’d Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca encourages religious leaders in all contexts to lend weight to vaccination programmes: “We must do all we can to protect people from COVID-19 and other potentially fatal diseases. It is our duty to exercise the influence trusted upon us, beyond the pulpits in our local churches.”

[\*\*WCC Vaccine Champions ready to serve – WCC news release 23 April 2021\*\*](#)

[WCC publishes first-of-its-kind handbook to help churches promote good health – WCC news release 28 April 2021](#)

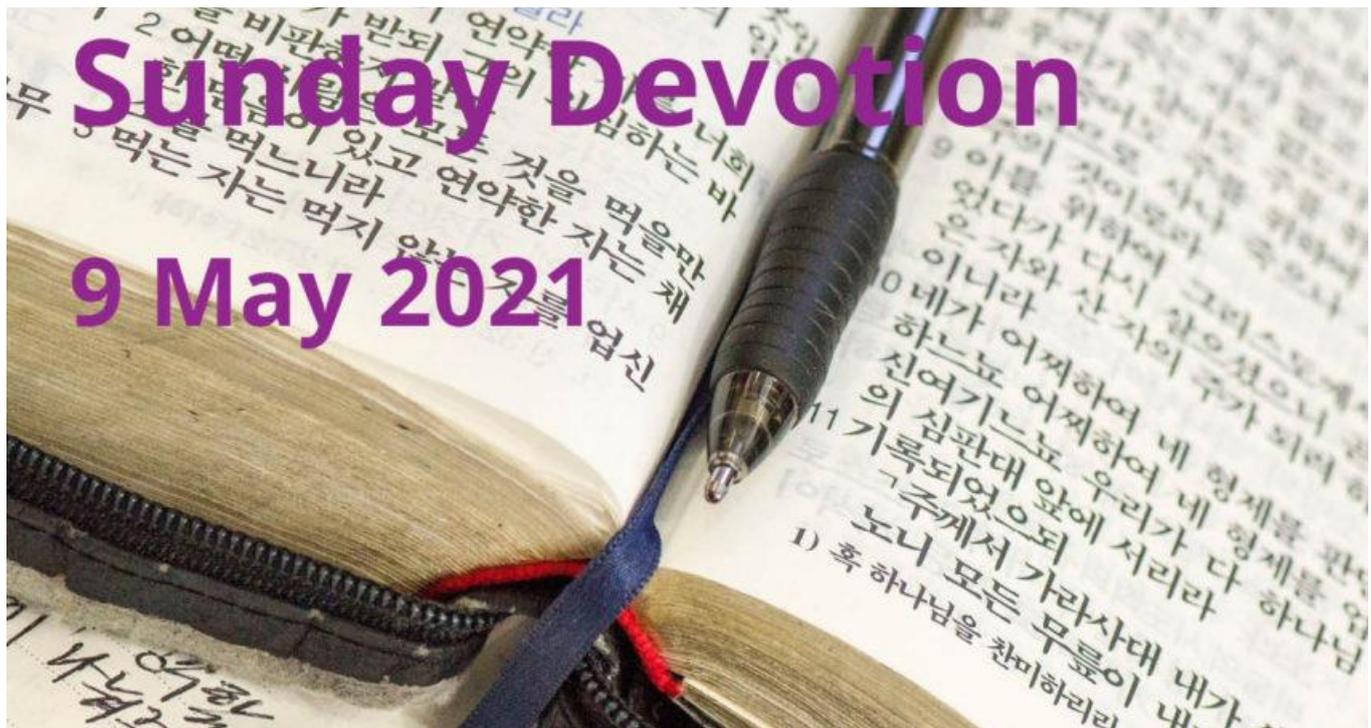
## [Health-Promoting Churches Volume II](#)

First published on the [World Council of Churches website](#) on 29 April 2021.

Sunday Devotions • Monday 3 May 2021 • By Eleanor Reid, Emma Williams

# Sunday Devotion: 9 May 2021, Sixth Sunday of Easter

Bearing fruit through ministry



**Main Readings:** [Acts 10.44-48](#); [Psalm 98](#); [1 John 5.1-12](#); [John 15.9-17](#) or [John 16.16-24](#)

**Supplementary Readings:** [Psalm 112](#); [1 Corinthians 15.28-34](#); [Acts 13.44-14.7](#); [Psalm 99](#); [John 15.17-27](#)

“You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.”  
([John 15.16](#))

We met in 2018 while leading Ichthus Camps together. Over the years we have seen dozens of teenagers experiencing awareness of God at these camps, sometimes for the first time. We have seen one teenager, in particular, go from being completely disinterested in God to then being curious to then being willing to explore faith more deeply.

We feel called by God to bear fruit by leading Ichthus Camps and being part of our intentional community, Community of the Way, based at St Francis College. Other Christians are chosen to bear fruit through other ministries. This line of scripture from John 15.16 helps give you a sense of purpose, as you know that God has chosen you for your role. When you see teenagers come through the

camps and then become leaders, you see “the fruit that will last” and the knock-on effect of people sharing their faith with others, who then have the confidence to share their faith, and so on.

It is reassuring to know that you are chosen and have a purpose. This equips you to bear fruit, which creates this knock-on effect.

This week, maybe you can think about what ministry you are called to or how the ministry you are currently involved in is bearing fruit.